Retro #24 Blockade Runners

Around midnight one Sunday in June of 1898, about forty St. Stanislaus students sneaked in the darkness to the end of the pier and slipped aboard a large schooner anchored there. Classes had ended and they wanted to get home for the summer vacation, but due to a yellow fever outbreak, Louisiana health officials enforced a quarantine, blocking anyone entering the state from Mississippi.

Sea Coast Echo June 18, 1898

ST. STANISLAUS BOYS

HAVE A MOST EVENTFUL "EXCURSION" TO NEW ORLEANS

Via Shell Beach. A Number of the Boys Left Here Sunday Night, Arriving at Shell Beach Tuesday Morning and Were Received and Handled Most Barbarously.

At dead of night as Bay St. Louis was wrapped in peaceful repose Sunday night, forty students stole out of the college ground, and marched quietly to the wharf, where a large schooner lay at anchor.

The students sailed all day Monday and Tuesday morning. An article in *The Sea Coast Echo* of June 18, 1898, gave a long account of their experience noting that *"All passed off well enough until morning when the Louisiana mosquitos began to assert their power and strength. These little creatures swarmed around and sent their long beaks into anyone and everyone. All attempt to get rid of them was useless; the mosquitos were out in force and meant business. Many of the boys had their arms, faces, and legs seriously swollen. Certainly, our Mississippi mosquitos, though well up in their trade, could not hold a candle to their sisters and brothers in Louisiana."*

Tuesday morning they were about three hundred yards off shore at Shell Beach in St. Bernard Parish when they spotted the train to New Orleans. The train was ready to leave, and by the boys landed, they had missed it by about ten minutes. Residents at Shell Beach were not very happy to see the students from Mississippi coming ashore. The sheriff and his posse arrived with warrants for their arrest for violating quarantine regulations. Finally, the students were allowed to board a special train to New Orleans, but not get off. That night the train brought them back to Bay St. Louis. They had many a story to share with their fellow students still stranded at St. Stanislaus.

About a week later, eighteen SSC students again tried to run the Louisiana blockade. This time they had a Brother with them and two hired sea captains. Aboard the school's schooner *Mizpah*, they bravely fought off the Louisiana mosquitoes during the night as they sailed from Bay St. Louis towards New Orleans. They were again stopped, this time at the Rigolets, a deep water

strait east of New Orleans. They were turned back at gunpoint by quarantine officials and local citizens with shotguns. (*Sea Coast Echo*, June 25, 1898)

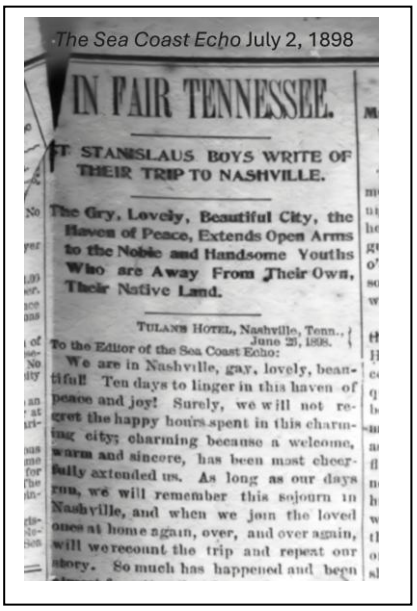
Sea Coast Echo June 25, 1898

SECOND ATTEMPT MADE

BY THE STUDENTS OF ST. STANISLAUS TO RUN THE BLOCKADE.

The Schooner Mizpah Leaves the Bay With Eighteen Passengers Who Were "Held Up" and Made to Return Home at the Point of Shotguns In Desperate Hands.

Brother Isidore, president of St. Stanislaus, anxious to get the students home safely, chartered a train on the L&N Railroad on June 22, 1898. Along with four Brothers and Professor John Hemmersbach, he set out with the 71 resident students still on campus and three convent girls eastward to Mobile. From there, they traveled by train north into Tennessee. From Tennessee, the Brothers were finally able to get the students to their homes in Louisiana. *The Sea Coast Echo* of July 2, 1898, noted that after a sojourn of ten days in Nashville, *"all boys will return to their homes, where anxious parents, brothers and sisters, will have their fears quieted in the presence of loved ones."* The article printed the names of all of the students *"whom fate marked out for this long and wearisome trip."* Typical of resilient youth, the students took their fate in stride and enjoyed the vacation in Nashville while staying at the Tulane Hotel there.



The Sea Coast Echo July 2, 1898

IN FAIR TENNESSEE.

ST STANISLAUS BOYS WRITE OF THEIR TRIP TO NASHVILLE.

The Gay, Lovely, Beautiful City, the Haven of Peace, Extends Open Arms to the Noble and Handsome Youths Who are Away From Their Own, Their Native Land.

TULANE HOTEL, Nashville, Tenn., June 29, 1898.

To the Editor of the Sea Coast Echo:

We are in Nashville, gay, lovely, beautiful! Ten days to linger in this haven of peace and joy! Surely, we will not regret the happy hours spent in this charming city; charming because a welcome, warm and sincere, has been most cheerfully extended us. As long as our days run, we will remember this sojourn in Nashville, and when we join the loved ones at home again, over, and over again, will we recount the trip and repeat our story. So much has happened and been

One student in a letter to the editor of *The Sea Coast Echo* described his adventures and how impressed he was with the hospitality of the people in Nashville. He said that the students suffered no hardships, only the inconvenience of having all their luggage fumigated. He wrote that during the day students played baseball games and toured the city with its *"many beautiful sights; huge buildings, spacious parks, grand churches, and a thorough street car service."* At night, he noted that ten members of the SSC orchestra directed by Professor Hemmersbach gave public concerts which the citizens of Nashville truly appreciated. The letter concluded that the students actually relished the journey and the experience of a lifetime.

Br. Xavier Werneth, SSC Archivist, Aug. 2025